

U. S. MARINES

CAMP

PENDLETON

CALIFORNIA

OCT 23 1968

THE UNFORGETTABLE STORY OF

- 2ND I.T.R.
- SCHOOLS BATTALION
- STAGING BATTALION

ON THE

WAY TO

Vietnam



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**U. S. MARINE CORPS BASE
CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA**



CAMP PENDLETON---

ON THE WAY TO

VIETNAM

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**CAMP PENDLETON
U.S. MARINE CORPS**



Some call it "The Jumping Off Place"; others tag it "The West Coast Training Ground," "The War School" and "The Big Boondocks." But neither these nor all the unrecorded names it has been called in the past quarter-century adequately describe Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, the largest amphibious training base in the world.

Situated on the old Rancho Santa Margarita y las Flores — one of the largest of the early Spanish land grants, Camp Pendleton was dedicated September 25, 1942, by the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was named in honor of a colorful Marine Corps general who earlier had encouraged the Corps to establish a base in the California he loved so much.

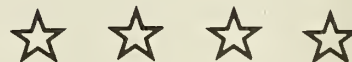
Since that September day in 1942, this sprawling 126,000-acre base has become one of the biggest and most complex military training sites in the Defense Department. It has trained literally hundreds of thousands of Marines and Navymen for combat in World War II, Korea and now Vietnam. Even between the wars, this giant base continued to grind out the replacements needed to fill the ranks of Marine divisions and Fleet Marine Force units in the Far East.

It was from here that the 4th Marine Division left for the Marshall Islands and the 5th Marine Division for Iwo Jima. It was from here that the 1st Division mounted out for Inchon, Korea, and the 3rd Division for Japan. It was from here that the 1st Division embarked for Vietnam — followed by elements of the 5th Division.

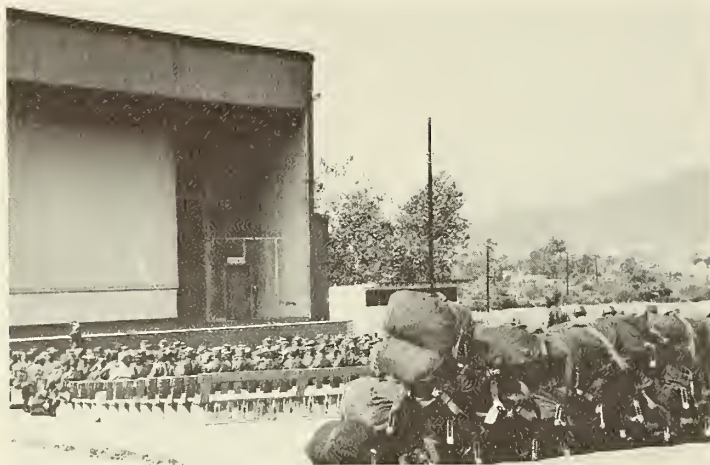
It is now home for the 5th Marine Division, the 4th Marine Division Headquarters (Nucleus) and many other Fleet Marine Force units. The base itself operates and provides facilities for the almost 50,000 Marines, dependents and civilian workers who call Camp Pendleton home.

Too, the base command encompasses the 2nd Infantry Training Regiment, Schools Battalion, Staging Battalion and Field Medical Service School. Together, these are responsible for training Marines from the time they leave Boot Camp until they are on their way either to Vietnam, another Fleet Marine Force unit, or some post or station elsewhere in the Corps.

Pendleton hills, ravines, barracks, parade grounds, mess halls and clubs echo the memories of all those thousands who learned the art of war here before departing for overseas. This book attempts to reflect the rigors, the sweat, the exhaustion, the devotion and, yes, the pride of today's Marines as they are trained and prepared in the cause of National Defense. This is "Camp Pendleton . . . on the way to Vietnam." ■







WELCOME TO I.T.R.

The Parade ground at the recruit depot in San Diego is not yet gray enough to be a memory when the Marine finds himself aboard a bus... heading north along the coast for Camp Pendleton and the 2nd Infantry Training Regiment – “I.T.R.,” as Marines abbreviate it.

Even before he gets a chance to relish the proud feeling of exchanging the name “Boot” for “Marine,” he is unceremoniously dumped at the northern end of the base amidst row after row of unlovely quonset huts and unlovelier tents in a camp called San Onofre.

The camp is in a valley and the new arrival looks up at the rugged beauty of the steep mountains ringing the camp...blissfully unaware of the hours he will invest on those demanding slopes.

A bright morning sun is burning away a light ground haze and the Marine trainee is jarred back into reality by the voice that bellows: “Stack those sea bags and take a seat down front!”

Welcome to I.T.R.! ■





I.T.R.

Camp Pendleton's 2nd Infantry Training Regiment and twin to the 1st I.T.R. at Camp Lejeune, N.C., is responsible for one of the most important missions in the Corps. Its job is to train recently graduated recruits to take their place in the United States Marine Corps. It aids and abets the transition from recruit to Marine.

The age-old tradition that every Marine is first an infantryman is given birth and life here. I.T.R. conducts individual combat training, advanced combat training, basic infantry training and combat familiarization.

All newly arrived Marines are assigned to companies and commence the training

which will make them proficient in individual combat. Leathernecks who are to receive specialist training in such fields as aviation, communication, artillery, tanks, etc., receive two weeks of this individual training and are then given leave before entering a technical school.

Marines who are to become infantrymen as a primary assignment are given an additional two weeks of individual training before beginning their specialty schools in basic infantry training. It is at this school that a Marine infantryman learns those skills which qualify him as rifleman, machine gunner, mortarman, anti-tank assault man, reconnaissance man or scout sniper.

The schedule is rigorous yet not beyond his ability to endure. (If he goes to sleep the moment he is allowed to do so — and doesn't open his eyes until the last note of reveille, there is at least a chance he will rack up eight hours of sleep each night!) And though the training is tough, so are the Marines.

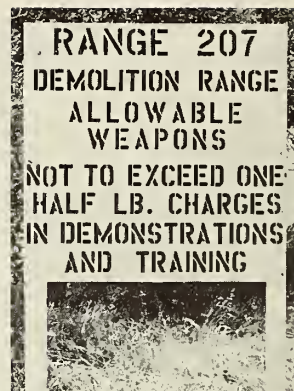
He doesn't live in luxury. There is constant exertion, the quonset huts are inconvenient, the view is of portable trailers housing toilet facilities...strung in a line at the end of the tent rows.

If there is one comforting thought to the Marine in this transitional stage, it is this: "I am not the first; all the others went this same route."











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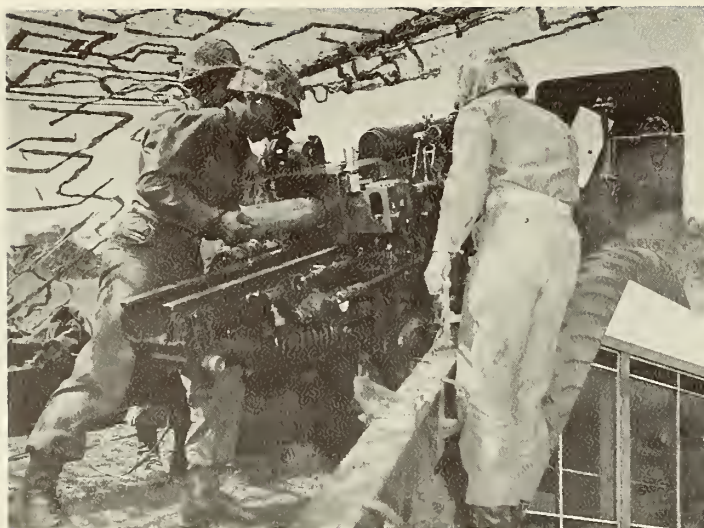




The busy, seemingly endless days at I.T.R. finally come to a close and the leather-tough young men leave for home, their first such visit as a Marine. Friends and relations are quick to notice the changes wrought in a few short months.

And the leave ends too quickly. Soon the men are heading for a new experience: some to post and stations around the world, others to Staging Battalion for the finishing touches in preparation for Vietnam, still others to Camp Pendleton's Schools Battalion... for more training. ■





SCHOOLS BATTALION

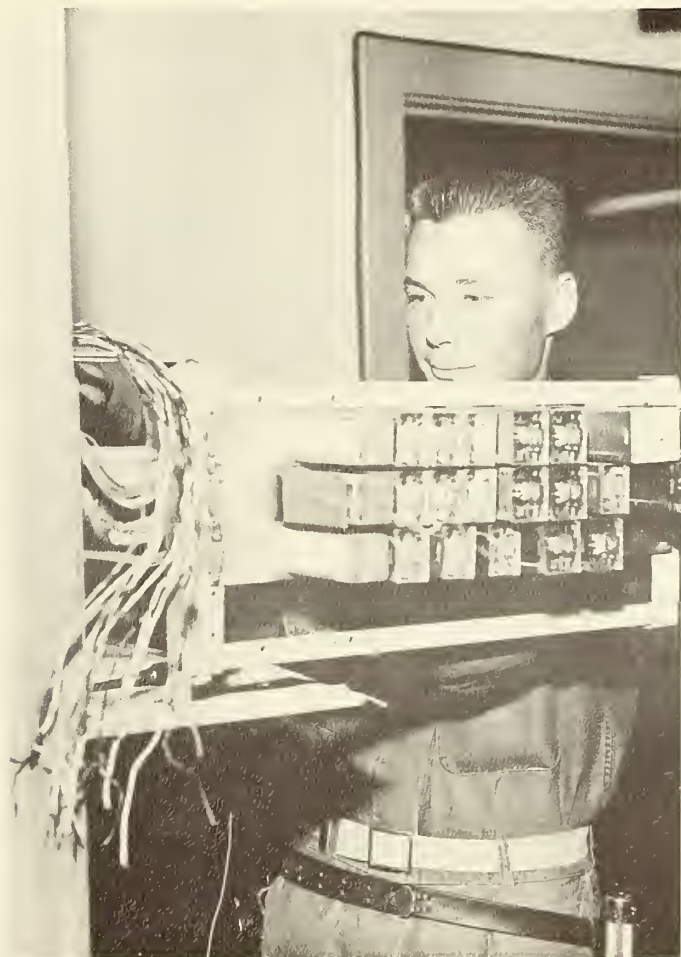
Contrary to an opinion held by many Americans, the Corps does need and use skills other than those of the infantryman. Marines must eat, communicate, be transported, and use the services and equipment peculiar to the modern battlefield. In short, the Corps requires men skilled in every trade and specialty within and without the special arts of war.

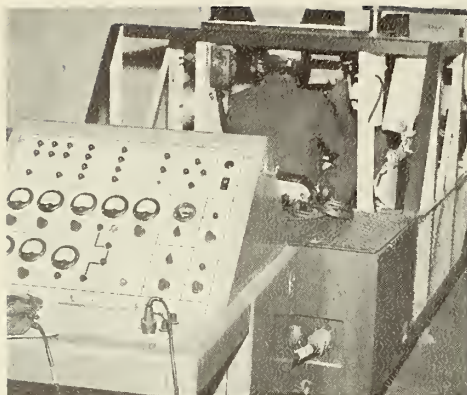
Schools Battalion, headquartered just off the beach at Camp Del Mar, operates and supervises the biggest campus in the Marine Corps.

Schools for personnel administration, tracked vehicle courses, and Vietnamese language... all these are near the battalion headquarters.

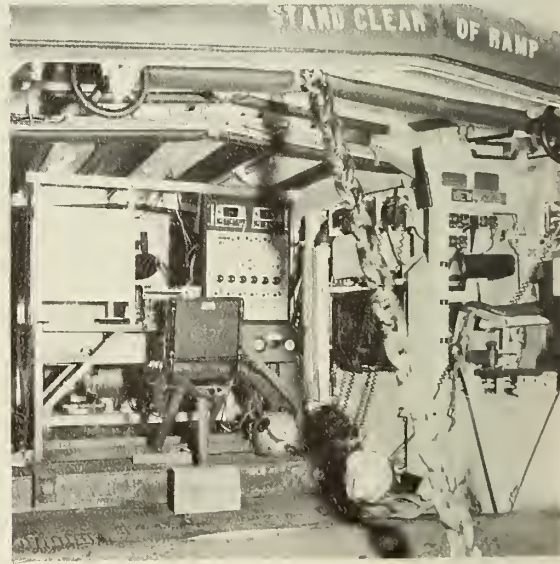
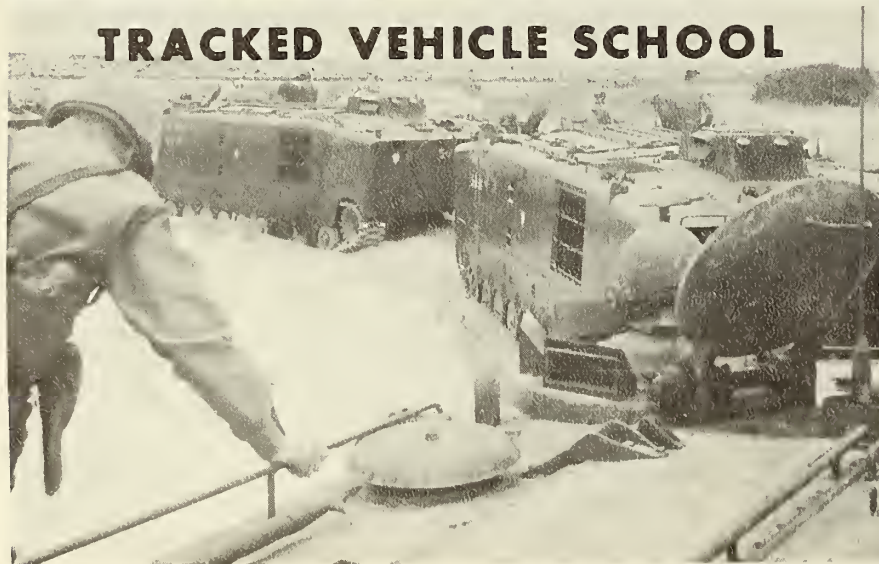
Motor transport school is at Camp Vado Del Rio, near the historic Ranch House. Other schools — field artillery, food services, bulk fuel handling, communications — dot the southwestern corner of the huge base.

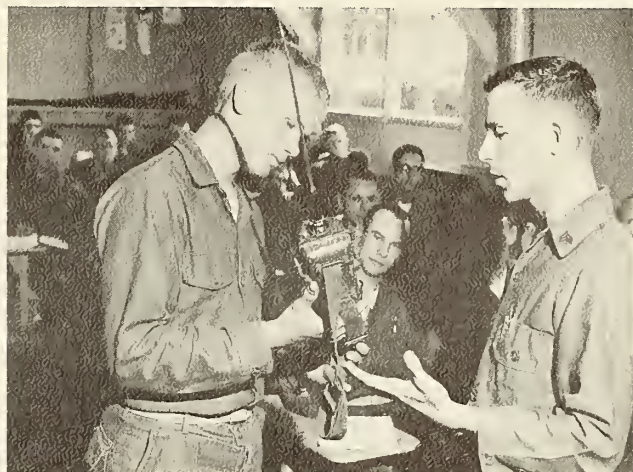
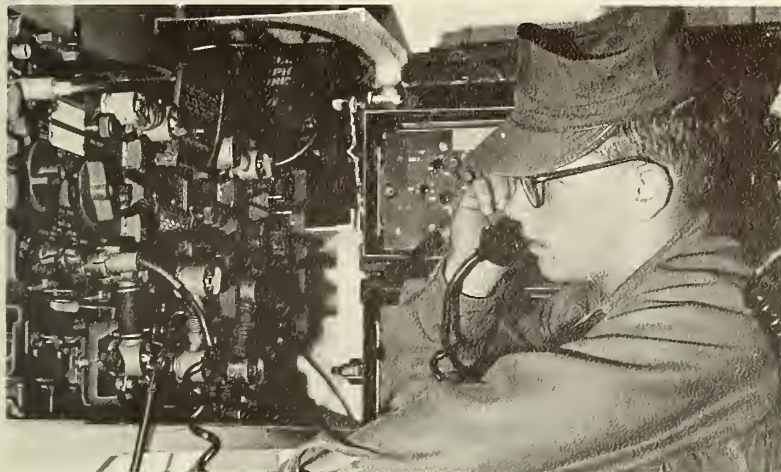
Whichever the school, chances are most of the instructors have recently returned from Vietnam and their desire to pass on their skills and experiences is matched by the desire of the Vietnam-bound students to learn. ■



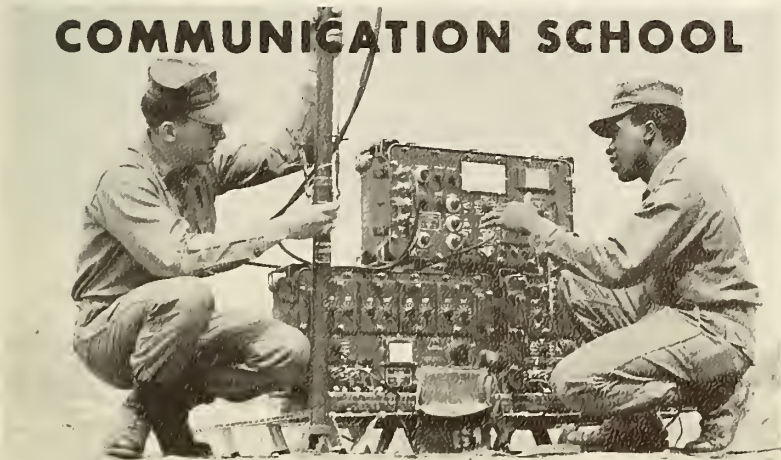


TRACKED VEHICLE SCHOOL





COMMUNICATION SCHOOL



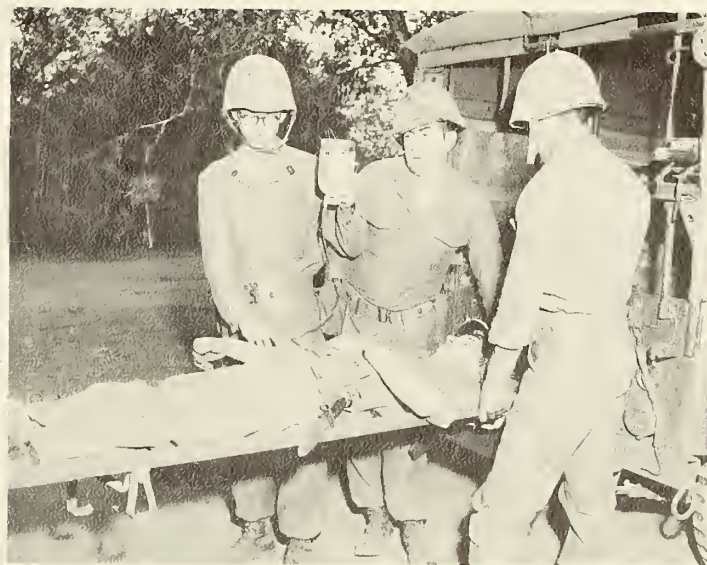
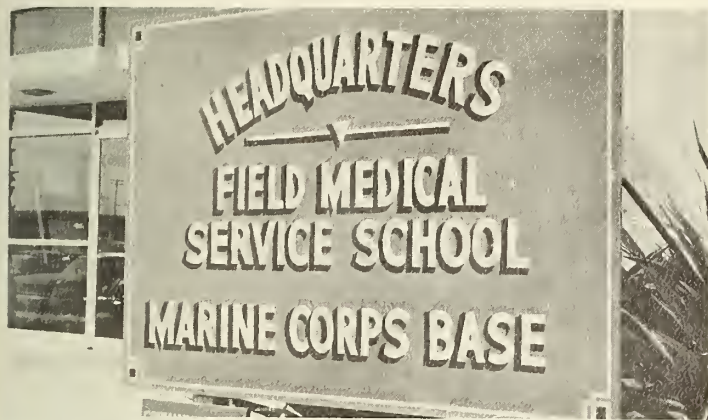
MOTOR TRANSPORT SCHOOL



FIELD ARTILLERY SCHOOL









STAGING BATTALION

Marines arrive at every hour, every day. Sea bags on their shoulders, they come from the world's duty stations, from graduating classes at Schools Battalion, from I.T.R., from the Fleet Marine Force. All are going to the same place: Vietnam!

They must first pass through Staging Battalion — "Gateway to the Pacific." Each Marine, upon arrival, is assigned to a unit and he begins immediately to prepare for the 15 training days (T-days) that lie ahead.

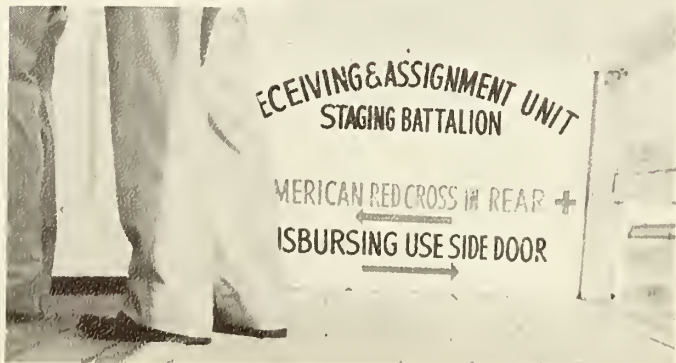
Clothing is checked and so are record books, identification cards and dogtags. Shots. A final physical and dental check.

Big buses take the men to Camp Las Pulgas, where they undergo extensive training in the location and disarming of mines and booby traps ... along the Vietnam Trail. A Vietnamese village, complete in every detail, serves as a classroom for days spent in learning the traditions and culture of Vietnam — and how to find and identify the enemies of Vietnam!

A special familiarization course on infantry weapons includes minute training in the firing and maintenance of a Marine's best friend, the M-16 rifle... ■



ALL PERSONNEL
REPORTING TO STAGING
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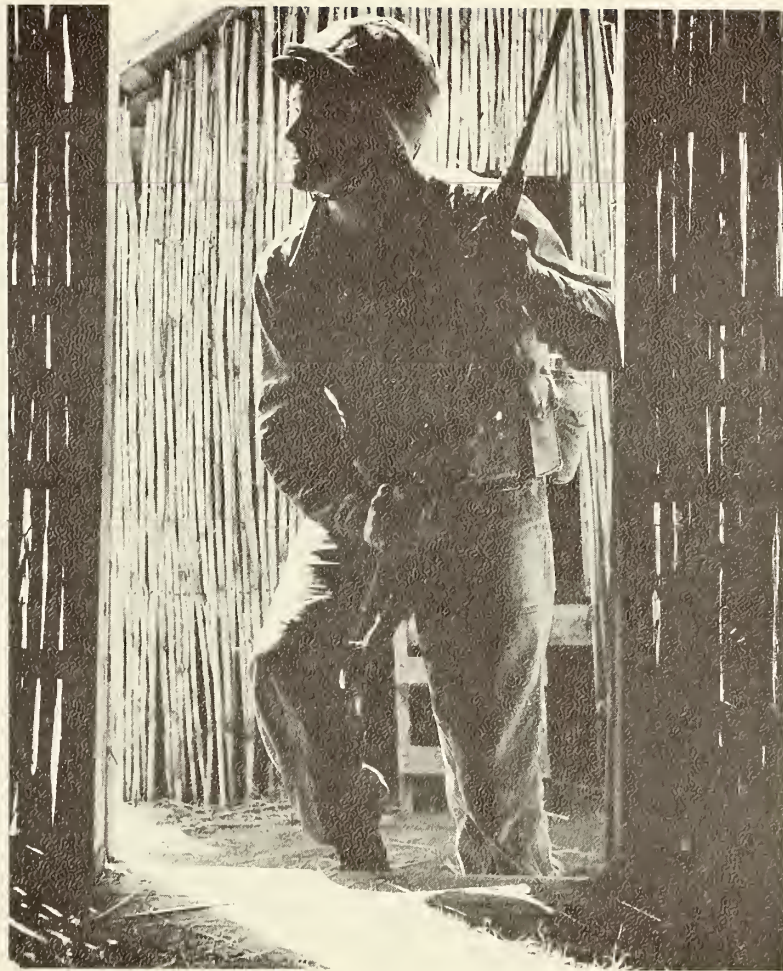








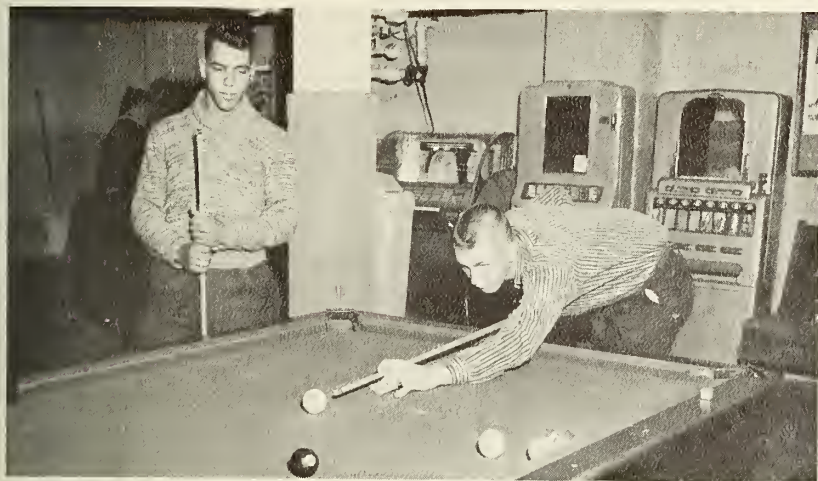






The training days, however demanding, are neither unceasing nor unending. There are hours here and there when time belongs to the man and he is free to pursue his whims, whether shopping on the base or playing at being civilian in the city. Too, there comes a time when the T-days are ended and embarkation is next on the schedule. And then the Marine remembers the lines, the hurry-up-and-wait, the muscle-bruising exertion of training. Trained, he is. Finest in the world, as a matter of fact. ■







ON THE WAY TO VIETNAM!

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VIETNAM

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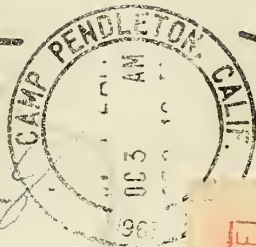
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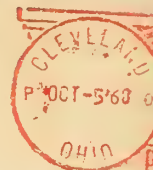
PFC. Ralph HARRIS 2438433

~~4th Replacement Co. Unit 424~~

~~Staging MCB Camp Pendleton Calif.~~
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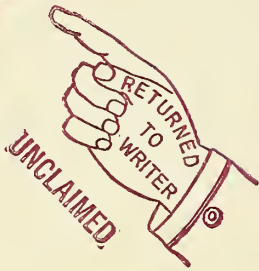
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